

In the Claims:

Please amend claims 1-2, 4-30, and 33-34 to read as follows:

1. (Amended) A method, comprising:

storing third-party electronic files in a database system, including storing and indexing electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic files;
providing access to the stored electronic files to a user terminal via a server communicatively coupled to the database system and to the user terminal; and
if user-input information sent from the user terminal to the server is received, processing the indexed electronic files according to the received user-input information in a manner that allows the processing to use the stored electronic characteristics of the electronic files.

2. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic files comprise email messages having metadata including threading information and wherein storing electronic characteristics associated with the native format comprises storing the threading information.

4. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein storing the third-party electronic files in the database system, including storing and indexing the electronic characteristics associated with the native format of the electronic files comprises:

recursively extracting a plurality of third-party electronic files;
identifying a plurality of objects having different data formats for each of the extracted electronic files, one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;
storing data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location in the database system;
converting the other identified objects and storing data associated with the converted objects in a second location in the database system; and
indexing the data stored in the first and second locations.

5. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein storing the third-party electronic files comprises:

storing data associated with text content of the electronic files in a first server unit; and

storing data associated with metadata content of the electronic files in a second server unit having a database.

6. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a user interface at the user terminal, the user interface comprising a field to enter search query information and a display to display processing summary information associated with the electronic files stored in the database system.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein processing the indexed electronic files comprises:

selecting one of the stored electronic files based on the user-input information

transmitting a copy of the selected electronic file for display at the user terminal;

receiving from the user terminal processing summary information associated with the displayed electronic file; and

storing the processing summary information in the database system to allow the processing information and their corresponding electronic file to be subsequently retrieved.

8. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic files comprise email messages having attachment files, the method further comprising:

separating the attachment files from the email messages;

converting the attachment files into a first format and storing the converted attachment files in the database system; and

converting the email messages into a second format and storing the converted email messages in the database system.

9. (Amended) A method to display stored electronic files, the method comprising:

providing a first field to allow a user to enter search query information directed towards the stored electronic files, wherein the electronic files comprise third-party electronic files;

providing a window to display a representation of an electronic file retrieved in response to the entered search query information, the electronic file being retrievable by matching the search query information with stored electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic files; and

providing a plurality of second fields to allow the user to enter and save processing information associated with the displayed representation of the electronic file.

10. (Amended) The method of claim 9 wherein the electronic files comprise email messages having threading information and wherein matching the search query information with the stored electronic characteristics comprises providing search results including threading information of email messages.

11. (Amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising:
providing summary fields having summary information associated with the stored electronic files; and

providing the summary fields with links that, if activated, trigger a display of representations of electronic files corresponding to the activated links.

12. (Amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising:
providing search result fields having search result information associated with the search query information; and

providing the search result fields with links that, if activated, trigger a display of representations of electronic files corresponding to the activated links.

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13. (Amended) A method, comprising:

- recursively extracting a plurality of third-party electronic files, each of the electronic files having electronic characteristics that are associated with a native format of the electronic file and that uniquely identify the electronic files from each other;
- for each of the extracted electronic files, identifying a plurality of objects having different data formats, one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;
- storing data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location in a database system;
- converting the other identified objects and storing data associated with the converted objects in a second location in the database system; and
- indexing the data stored in the first and second locations.

14. (Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein recursively extracting the plurality of third-party electronic files comprises extracting third-party electronic files located in a plurality of paths in a directory structure.

15. (Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein the electronic files comprise email messages and the electronic characteristics comprise metadata, the metadata including threading information.

16. (Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein the electronic files comprise email messages having attachment files, the method further comprising:

- separating the attachment files from the email messages;
- converting the attachment files into a first format and storing the converted attachment files in the database system; and
- converting the email messages into a second format and storing the converted email messages in the database system.

17. (Amended) A network node, comprising:

a server communicatively coupled to a database system, the database system having stored and indexed therein third-party electronic files and electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic files, the server responsive to a search query to search the database system for electronic files matching the search query, the server being configured to use indexing information and the stored electronic characteristics to provide search results that are responsive to the search query.

18. (Amended) The network node of claim 17 wherein the server stores user-input information associated with representations of electronic files, the user-input information being stored by the server in the database system and being retrievable by the server in response to subsequent search queries.

19. (Amended) The network node of claim 17 wherein the electronic files comprise email messages having threading information, the electronic characteristics of the electronic files including the threading information, the server being configured to provide the search results to the user node along with email messages and their corresponding threading information.

20. (Amended) A system, comprising:

a conversion engine to convert third-party electronic files into a database format, the conversion engine being configured to identify electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic files; and

a server coupleable to the conversion engine and communicatively coupled to a database system, the database system having stored and indexed therein the third-party electronic files converted by the conversion engine and the electronic characteristics identified by the conversion engine, wherein the server is responsive to a search query to search the database system for electronic files matching the search query, wherein the server is configured to use the indexing information and the electronic characteristics to provide search results that are responsive to the search query.

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21. (Amended) The system of claim 20 wherein the conversion engine is structured to load the electronic files into the database system, the conversion engine including:

at least one recursive engine to recursively extract a plurality of third-party electronic files;

at least one controller coupled to the recursive engine to identify a plurality of objects having different data formats for each of the extracted electronic files, one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;

an upload unit coupled to the controller to store data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location in the database system; and

at least one converter coupled to the controller to convert the other identified objects and to store text data associated with the converted objects in a second location in the database system, wherein

the data stored in the first and second locations are indexed.

22. (Amended) The system of claim 20 wherein the server comprises:

a first server unit to store indexing information associated with text content of the electronic files; and

a second server unit to store indexing information associated with metadata content of the electronic files.

23. (Amended) A machine-readable medium containing a data structure of third-party electronic file information comprising a plurality of first tables having indexing information associated with a text content of third-party electronic files, a second plurality of tables having indexing information associated with metadata content of the electronic files, the indexing information in the second tables corresponding to electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic files.

24. (Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 23, further comprising a third plurality of tables having a substantially native display format of the electronic files.

25. (Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 23 wherein the second plurality of tables includes fields to store user-input information associated with representations of electronic files processed by a user.

26. (Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 23 wherein the second plurality of tables further have indexing information associated with attachment files of the electronic files.

27. (Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 23 wherein the electronic files comprise email messages having metadata information, the second plurality of tables having indexing information corresponding to the metadata information, the metadata information useable to relate threading information of the electronic files.

28. (Amended) A machine-readable medium having stored therein instructions, which when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform the following, comprising:

provide access to third-party electronic files stored in a database system, the stored electronic files being stored and indexed in the database system along with electronic characteristics associated with the native format of the electronic files; and

if user-input information is received, process the indexed third-party electronic files according to the received user-input information and by using the stored electronic characteristics.

29. (Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the processor further performs the following, comprising:

if user-input information including a text content search query is received, search the stored electronic files using indexing information associated with textual content of the stored electronic files; and

if user-input information including a metadata search query is received, search the stored electronic files using indexing information associated with metadata content of the stored electronic files.

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30. (Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the stored electronic files comprise email messages and wherein the processor searches for individual email messages based on user-input information including a search query of metadata content or text content of the email messages.

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33. (Amended) The network node of claim 17 wherein the electronic files comprise electronic legal documents.

34. (Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein the electronic files comprise electronic legal documents.

Please add new claims 35-49 to read as follows:

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35. (New) The system of claim 20 wherein the electronic files comprise electronic legal documents.

36. (New) The system of claim 21, further comprising another converter coupled to the controller to convert an attachment of an electronic file and to store the converted attachment in the second location in the database system.

37. (New) The system of claim 21, further comprising at least one administration program to generate a directory structure in the second location that indexes the text data stored therein.

38. (New) The system of claim 37, further comprising at least one administration program to generate catalog and directory parameters in a third location of the

database system that reference the directory structure in the second location and the text data stored therein.

39. (New) The system of claim 37, further comprising at least one administration program to generate catalog and database parameters in first location of the database system that reference the data stored therein.

40. (New) The system of claim 20, further comprising a server unit and engine coupled between the server and the database system, the server unit being configured to receive the search query and to pass the search query to the engine to allow the engine to apply the search query to the database, the engine being configured to return the search results of the search query back to the server unit.

41. (New) The system of claim 40 wherein the server unit includes a virtual directory to reference data stored in the database system.

42. (New) The system of claim 20, further comprising:
a user authentication unit communicatively coupled to the server to control access to the server;

a user information unit communicatively coupled to the server to store information associated with users authenticated by and provided with access by the user authentication unit; and

an administration unit to support services between the server and the user authentication and user information units.

43. (New) An apparatus, comprising:
at least one recursive engine to recursively extract a plurality of third-party electronic files, each of the electronic files having electronic characteristics that are associated with a native format of the electronic files and that uniquely identify the electronic files from each other;

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at least one controller coupled to the recursive engine to identify, for each of the extracted files, a plurality of objects having different data formats, one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;

a first storage location coupled to the controller to store data associated with the one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;

at least one converter coupled to the controller to convert the other identified objects; and

a second storage location coupled to the converter to store text data associated with the converted objects, wherein the data stored in the first and second storage locations are indexed.

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44. (New) The apparatus of claim 43, further comprising another converter coupled to the controller to convert an attachment of an electronic file and to store the converted attachment in the second storage location.

45. (New) The apparatus of claim 43 wherein the electronic files comprise electronic legal documents.

46. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic files comprise electronic legal documents.

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~~47. (New) The method of claim 9 wherein the electronic files comprise electronic legal documents.~~

48. (New) The machine-readable medium of claim 23 wherein the electronic files comprise electronic legal documents.

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~~49. (New) The machine-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the electronic files comprise electronic legal documents.~~